

# Language Access Services Annual Report

**2019  
Issue V**



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*“Celebrating diversity, advancing equality.”*

# WELCOME!



*I am delighted to share with you our 2019 annual report.*

*As you will read in this report, major accomplishments for this year include the introduction of Clara, our multilingual website avatar and the deployment of the first AI (Artificial Intelligence) courthouse kiosk, which integrates Clara and other state of the art technologies. You may wonder, why is Language Access Services working on AI? Because we need to generate options to improve court access for people who often feel lost in this “unknown territory” of the legal system. This applies to LEP (Limited English Proficient) individuals and people with disabilities, but it also applies to the public in general. They don’t interact with the courts regularly and many are self-represented. By combining NLP (Natural Language Processing), speech recognition and various technologies we are creating an alternative for users to find their way around the courthouse, obtain forms and basic information, etc. And Clara does all this in a neutral, friendly manner.*

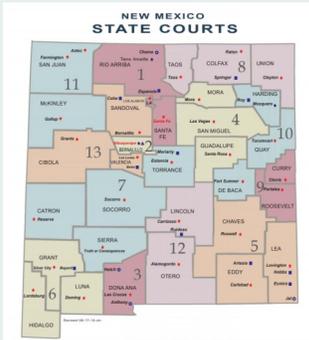
*Also this year, we implemented a new court interpreter online scheduling system, which has allowed us to move to paperless billing, translated 441,032 words (1,766 pages) and accommodated over 50 different languages. We continued to work with the UNM Legal Clinic to improve access to justice for underserved communities and create opportunities for NMCLA students to get hands-on experience. We also expanded the scope of the Domestic Violence and Domestic Relations Forms Project, and we are leading the way in this regard nationwide!*

*In celebration of the 10-year anniversary of the NM Center for Language Access, tuition for the Language Access Specialist Certificate Program will be free in 2020.*

*Included in this report, you will find the voices of those who participate in the various projects launched by our program.*

*Throughout the years, Language Access Services has been able to generate innovative alternatives to address NM-specific challenges. I have had the great opportunity to work with judges, court staff, community organizations, interpreters and translators in these projects and I am grateful for the unwavering support from our Supreme Court and administrative authority. Very special thanks go to the Santa Fe County First Judicial District Court for their willingness to spearhead the AI Kiosk initiative and the Domestic Relations Forms pilot.*

**Paula Couselo-Findikoglu, Senior Statewide Program Manager, Language Access Services  
NM Administrative Office of the Courts**



The Language Access Services Unit of the NM Administrative Office of the Courts develops and delivers guidance, policies, procedures and training for employees working in the courts to ensure comprehensive language access inside and outside the courtroom for LEP, Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title II of the ADA and Executive Order 13166.

The program supports the NM State Courts through: language access planning and funding, training, signage, assistive listening devices, in-person and remote interpreting services and translation of documents.



*From left to right: Anabel Vela, Eileen Spoonhoward, Alex Araiza, Pip Lustgarten (consultant), Margarita Araiza, Joshua Kahawai, Peggy Cadwell, Janie Hernández, Paula Couselo-Findikoglu*



**Arthur W. Pepin, Director, NM Administrative Office of the Courts**

Language Access Services (LAS) continued to expand the reach of access services throughout 2019. LAS broadened the availability and use of video remote interpreting services to courts that would otherwise require interpreters to travel long distances. This follows the full implementation of real-time translation services for applications for domestic violence protection orders filed in languages other than English. All district courts now accept non-English applications that can be sent to LAS for translation into English on the same day, often within an hour of the request being sent to AOC. This is a significant improvement in access to justice for those who look to courts for protection from domestic violence.

LAS also continued to very efficiently manage resources with implementation in November of a new system for scheduling interpreters that made the transition from paper to electronic payments and provides for more effective use of guaranteed interpreter time. The AOC Fiscal Services Department provided significant assistance and cooperation to LAS to implement these efficiencies and ensure compliance with fiscal controls and regulations of the Department of Finance and Administration.

LAS also advanced access to language services through two additional important projects this year: the Clara Avatar which provides interactive spoken and visual assistance on the LAS website, and the LAS partnership with the UNM Law School, where law students work in the legal clinic with students studying to become interpreters. LAS never rests from efforts to broaden ways in which those with limited English proficiency can access justice in the courts.

**Congratulations to the entire LAS team for the great successes of 2019!**



At the “All Hands” statewide employee meeting on October 30, 2019, the Language Access Services team presented a plaque to AOC Director Artie Pepin: ***“For your unwavering support and unrelenting guidance that helps in leading our path to a successful program. You are being honored with much appreciation and gratitude.”***

# ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE COURTS

## CLARA AND SMART KIOSKS



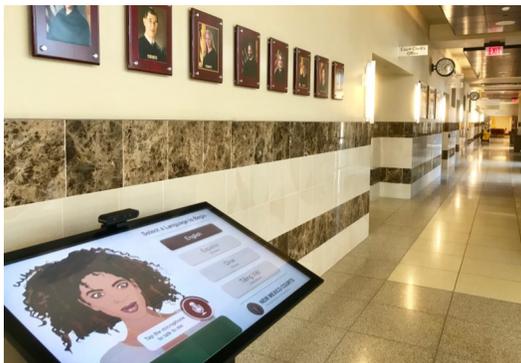
To improve website accessibility, LAS launched Clara, an interactive digital avatar who guides users through our LAS website. This virtual assistant is multilingual and can respond to either written or verbal commands. Her name is a nod to the Spanish word “claro,” meaning “clear,” and was championed by Renee Valdez of Metro Court, who explained: “Clara, female for claro. Clear is kind!”

The Navajo version of Clara uses studio-recorded audio instead of Text to Speech (TTS). It was a real team effort to make this happen! Big thanks to everyone involved and especially to Translator Frank Morgan, who translated the avatar’s interface into Navajo, and Court Interpreter Joanna Manyoats, who is Clara’s official voice in Navajo!

Reducing linguistic, cultural and economic barriers is the primary objective of the AI courthouse kiosk project. The project integrates Clara, Natural Language Processing (NLP), a branch of Artificial Intelligence, voice command, speech recognition and other technologies, to materially improve access to court services.



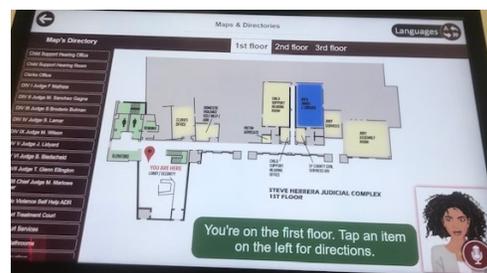
The first AI-Kiosk prototype was installed at the First Judicial District Court in January and offers users help with directions, forms and FAQ. Users navigate through the kiosk by tapping menu items or using voice-command. Clara uses NLP to respond to users’ questions.



A work group comprised of employees from the First, Second, Fifth, Eighth and Eleventh Judicial District Courts has been collaborating with LAS on the AI-Kiosk Project. Courts can tailor content to their local needs, including which languages are offered. Additional functionalities are in the pipeline.

While never intended to replace interaction with court employees, the kiosks can save time for staff and customers alike by providing simple and frequently-requested information, in accessible formats.

In a scarcely populated state like New Mexico, web content accessibility is key to mitigating unnecessary travel time and expense for court users trying to obtain basic information. And once users are at the courthouse, information must be provided in a clear and unimposing manner, in a language and format they understand.



***“The First Judicial District Court is happy to welcome Clara, the avatar kiosk to our court. We are excited to utilize this technology to assist the public with questions they may have about the judicial system, provide directions throughout the building and allow an easy means for customers to access forms. Clara is a welcome addition to our courthouse and we look forward to expanding features of the kiosk to improve our customers’ experiences.” - Kathleen Vigil, First Judicial District Court CEO/CFO***

## TAP OR TALK FOR HELP!

For this project, LAS contracted with local Software Developer Alexander Smith, and Advanced Robot Solutions, a CT company specializing in AI and robots. The hardware was acquired from Ideum, a local company specializing in museum exhibits. In addition to being able to answer over 7,000 questions (and “learning” how to answer more questions through user interaction), Clara helps court users get to their hearings, emails them forms and packets... and this is only the beginning!



**“Courts will be able to customize their kiosk, choose their own avatar and even give it a personality —yes, avatars have their own personality! We went from a concept – pictured on this page – to a real product in 6 months. We have a team of experts who are passionate and get ‘psyched’ about what they do. When you have the right people involved, amazing things can happen!”** -Paula Couselo-Findikoglu, LAS, Project Lead



**“I’ve really enjoyed helping to make Clara the new virtual assistant for New Mexicans who need help navigating the courts. The whole team has put a lot of effort into making her useful as**

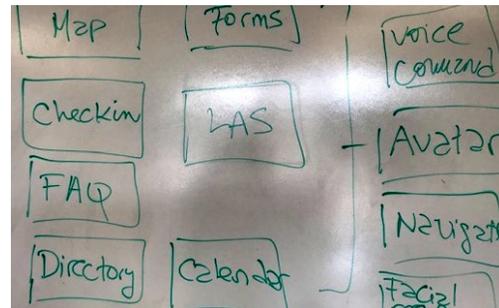


**“The kiosk project has the potential to help customers across the state feel comfortable navigating the courts and asking for help even if they have English language challenges. The technology features built into the design of the kiosk will make ease of use and access to information better than ever for a customer entering a courthouse for the first time. Touch screens and voice commands will help even if customers are not comfortable using computers; this design can be used by anyone, regardless of technical skill.”** - Dick Wilkinson, Judicial Information Division, NMAOC

**well as fun to interact with. It’s particularly gratifying to think that Clara could help those with limited English proficiency who might feel extra intimidated dealing with the court system.”** - Alexander Smith, Software Developer



**“This was Paula’s idea and vision to create the first engaging and friendly multilingual avatar-kiosk platform for courts. Our company is honored to be a part of the software development team that is bringing this important language access initiative to life, starting with Clara at the Santa Fe courthouse. It’s great to see and hear Clara giving way-finding directions to a court visitor and helping others with their court needs; she’s providing great value to the court. The New Mexico Court system is the clear leader in the US when it comes to the application of innovative technology to best serve those that visit and work at the courts. We look forward to the innovative IT breakthroughs we’ll do together in the year ahead!”** - Paul McManus, CEO, Advanced Robot Solutions





## Full NMAOC Scholarships for LAS Training in 2020!

12-week classes begin:

March 23, 2020

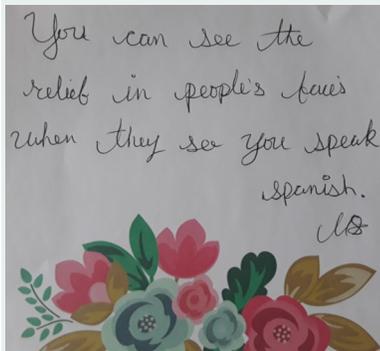
July 20, 2020

October 19, 2020

Classes are offered in a self-directed online format. Topics covered include: online learning techniques, ethics and best practices, legal terminology in English and Spanish, methods of interpreting for the public, cultural competency, and components of the justice system.

Don't miss this opportunity! The \$1,000 LAS training fee will be entirely covered by NMCLA throughout 2020! There is a cap on the number of places, so apply NOW!

[www.nmcenterforlanguageaccess.org](http://www.nmcenterforlanguageaccess.org)



# 10 YEARS OF NMCLA!



## Celebrating Diversity, Advancing Equality.

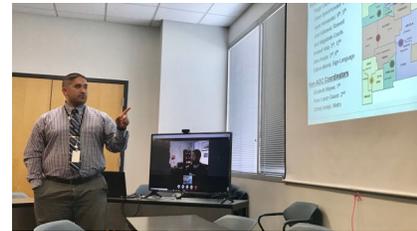


2020 will mark the 10th year of operation for the New Mexico Center for Language Access, the training branch of AOC Language Access Services. The New Mexico Center for Language Access (NMCLA) is a program of the Administrative Office of the Courts, created with funding support from the State Justice Institute to ensure language access across the New Mexico justice system. The Center offers a variety of online training options for court interpreter certification candidates, bilingual employees of the courts and other justice system agencies and for already certified or working interpreters.

For details on 2020 Interpreter training and examinations, visit: [www.nmcenterforlanguageaccess.org](http://www.nmcenterforlanguageaccess.org)

## Language Access Specialists

Language Access Specialists (LASs) are a category of employee specifically created by the New Mexico Judiciary to ensure the delivery of meaningful language access services in out-of-courtroom settings (such as the clerk's window or self help center).



The New Mexico LAS designation and training program was the first of its kind and has since served as a model for the judiciary throughout the nation.



In 2019, NMCLA trained and certified 11 LAS individuals. There are now a total of 132 Language Access Specialists throughout our state, working in Spanish, Navajo, Keres and Polish.



***"I live and work in a Spanish speaking community. I am thankful that I am able to help my community when and as needed."***

*- LAS Symposium attendee*

# LANGUAGE ACCESS SPECIALISTS' SYMPOSIUM

*In addition to monthly webinars for Continuing Education Units, LASs have the option to attend an annual symposium. This full-day event affords LASs an opportunity to meet and collaborate with their colleagues from across the state while receiving in-person training and a full year's worth of Continuing Education Units.*



*This year's symposium was organized by Margarita Araiza-Johnston, Statewide Language Access Coordinator and took place on Friday, October 25 in Albuquerque and for*



*the first time was offered completely free of charge to all employees of the Judiciary. 32 LASs were in attendance, and topics included Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance, Terminology, and Real Life Ethical Scenarios.*

***The 2020 symposium will also be free, and LASs are welcome to submit ideas for training topics they would find useful. Have ideas for the symposium? Want to be a speaker? Email Ms. Araiza-Johnston at: [aocmx@nmcourts.gov](mailto:aocmx@nmcourts.gov)***

## Congratulations!

At the 2019 event, awards were given recognizing those LASs in attendance who have held their certification for 5 years and for 9 years (the very first cohort). Congratulations and Thank You to the following individuals and to ALL our valued Language Access Specialists!

### 9 years

Alonzo García  
Gloria Cota  
Renee Valdez

### 5 years

Christina Montoya  
Andrea Carbajal  
Elpidia Solís  
Michelle García  
Regina Bejarano



**Alonso Garcia**  
NMAOC



**Gloria Cota**  
Second JD Court



**Renee Valdez**  
Metropolitan Court

***“Being an LAS allows true access to justice for those who need assistance in their own language. That in itself is rewarding.”***  
***- LAS Symposium attendee***

**Ongoing Partners:  
NMAOC—UNM Law Clinic**



**Karla Cota:**

*"Volunteering at the UNM School of Law has been a pleasure. I have gained tremendous experience as an interpreter working hands-on in real-life scenarios. I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to work with the law students and honored to be trusted to assist with their clients. It is truly gratifying for me to help people in need of an interpreter."*



# OUT AND ABOUT

Once again this year, LAS staff have been on the road! Here are some of the trainings, conferences and initiatives in which we participated:

## **Partnership with UNM Law Clinic**

Peggy Cadwell (NW Central Region Coordinator) is a regular presenter at the UNM Law Clinic, where she teaches law students to work with court interpreters on site and over the phone, a critical skill for their volunteer work. Our partnership with the Clinic continued to strengthen throughout 2019. The initiative brings together law students volunteering in the Community Lawyering Clinic with Justice System Interpreters in training at the NM Center for Language Access. Both sets of participants are in turn brought together with low-income individuals needing free legal and language assistance.

## **Council of Language Access Coordinators**

Paula Couselo spoke about the Avatar-AI Kiosk project and the NMAOC-UNM Law Clinic partnership to her national counterparts at the Council of Language Access Coordinators conference that was held in San Francisco in September. The overall theme of the conference this year was *A Language Access SWOT Analysis: Our Programs' Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats*.



## **Court Technology Conference**

Ms. Couselo presented New Mexico's innovative Avatar-Kiosk integration project at the Courts Technology Conference hosted by the National Center for State Courts in New Orleans this September. Over 1,500 court professionals attended the event!



## **End Violence Against Women International Conference**

Patricia Galindo (AOC Senior Attorney) and Paula Couselo co-presented in San Diego on *Improving Access to Justice: A Multi-faceted Approach to Reducing Barriers to Underserved Communities*.

## **NAJIT Conference**

Eileen Spoonhoward (NE Region Coordinator) and Janie Hernández (SE Region Coordinator) were able to travel to Nashville to participate in the National Association of Judicial Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) conference in May.

## **LAS staff were also active closer to home!**

A full-day orientation for newly-qualified interpreters took place in August. The training was led by Management Analyst Joshua Kahawai, NE Region Coordinator Eileen Spoonhoward, and First Judicial District Court Coordinating Interpreter Rebecca García.

## **New Scheduling System Training**

To ensure a smooth transition, our team both attended and delivered extensive trainings linked to the November launch of Interpreter Intelligence, the new scheduling system.

## **New Judges Training**

Ms. Couselo presented at the annual new judges training organized by the Judicial Education Center. The presentation included hands-on case studies to stimulate discussion.

# PAPERLESS BILLING!



*“With implementation of our new interpreter scheduling system, I am pleased with the capabilities now available. This system allows the Language Access Team to better serve the courts and citizens of New Mexico. The ability for our contracted interpreters to submit invoices electronically has streamlined the payment process significantly. As we move forward with this new technology, we are committed to improving its performance by addressing the realistic needs from the courts and our interpreters.” - Joshua Kahawai, Management Analyst, LAS, AOC*



On November 4, 2019, AOC Language Access Services went live statewide with a brand new interpreter scheduling management system!



Interpreter Intelligence has enabled us to integrate our scheduling and billing systems (previously electronic and paper, respectively), which used to be entirely separate. LAS staff worked diligently with the vendor so that the billing system reflects a highly complex picture with many variables. .. Not an easy task!



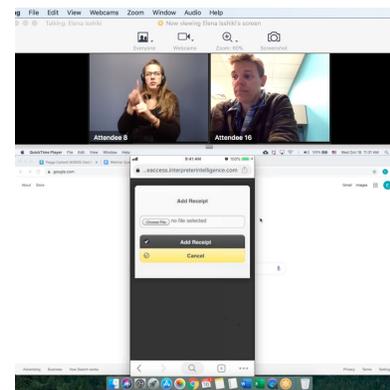
Tying the scheduling and billing pieces together vastly improves our ability to evaluate the needs of the courts and the deficiencies in our program. Coordinators are better able to keep track of interpreters who are under guarantee (interpreters are guaranteed certain scheduled hours when cancelled with less than 24 hours notice, as well as certain minimum payments) and to redirect them to fill other jobs. We can run detailed cancellation reports and track reasons for cancellations. All these features enable our program to conserve and consolidate resources.

Where interpreters previously had to complete paper invoices and submit them by mail, the new system is completely paperless. Everything can be handled electronically, thereby reducing processing time, lowering costs, and offering a positive

environmental impact.

An additional key feature is a portal for interpreters. Here, interpreters can update their availability and view their schedule. Continuing Education Units, professional credentials, and identification photos (all of which previously had to be sent in by mail or email and subsequently processed by AOC staff) can now be directly uploaded to the portal.

The New Mexico AOC was able to heavily customize the national vendor's system to our needs. It is continuously being updated, and we look forward to the new features that will be available soon.



To this last point: the enhanced access to statistics regarding interpreter usage will allow us to more accurately anticipate each court's specific needs and better assess where to direct our resources.

We provided training to court staff throughout the state prior to the launch and will be glad to provide any additional training on request. Feedback from the courts has been very positive, with no disruption reported during implementation. AOC Language Access Services would like to thank all users for your flexibility in this transition!



# NEW SRL RESOURCES

Language Access Services is always looking for innovative new ways to expand accessibility of court services that are provided outside the courtroom (in settings such as the clerk's window).



New Mexico courts now have the option (at no cost) to sign up for on-demand Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) services. The vendor offers ASL and a variety of spoken languages on demand, which is a great way to serve walk-in court users! We will provide you with a tablet, or you can use your own equipment if preferred.

To sign up for on-demand VRI, simply visit: <https://networkinterpretingservice.com/nmcourts>

## Live Chat!



The Santa Fe Magistrate Court is leading the way in augmenting accessibility for Deaf and hard of hearing court users. This year, AOC Language Access Services provided the court with UbiDuo equipment. This technology enables live chat to take place between the court customer and staff, with each party typing into their respective station. Walk-in Deaf and hard of hearing court users who have not submitted advance notice of interpreter need can now converse immediately at the counter, eliminating the need to pass paper notes back and forth or to wait for an interpreter.



## SRL Content in Alternative Formats

In New Mexico:

46% of the population reads at or below a 5th grade level  
9.6% of the population is Limited English Proficient  
5% of interpreter need in the courts each year is for ASL

Cognizant of these needs, AOC Language Access Services thinks beyond our basic Title VI obligations to serve LEP court users, always striving toward accessibility in the broadest terms. This year, we were proud to create videos for Self Represented Litigants. Offering an alternative to written English, these resources will assist court users who are: Low literacy/computer literacy, Limited English Proficient, Deaf/hard-of-hearing and blind/low-vision.



Videos on the following topics are closed-captioned and either available or coming soon in English, American Sign Language, Spanish and Navajo:

- Which Court is Which
- Representing Yourself in Court
- Domestic Violence
- Divorce
- Name Change
- Kinship Guardianship
- Appeals
- Probate

You can check out these exciting new resources at: <https://languageaccess.nmcourts.gov>

***“I was deeply honored to become involved in preparing the self help guides in Navajo language. I appreciate the support of Language Access Services in the process. Recorded messages for the Navajo public are so important because of the low level of literacy and proficiency in English. The videos will increase awareness of court services for the people.”***

***- Frank Morgan, Navajo interpreter and translator***

# ONGOING INITIATIVES

## Language Access Planning



AOC began its Language Access Planning (LAP) efforts in 2011, with grant funds from the State Justice Institute. The LAP is a document in which each judicial district or group of courts affirms its commitment to providing language access to LEP persons under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166, and documents its locally-tailored policies, procedures and resources for service provision.

Since 2011, LAP team meetings facilitated by AOC Consultant Pip Lustgarten have played a vital role in bringing courts together across district and magistrate, county and statewide lines, enabling them to collaborate on innovative solutions to language access challenges. Ms. Lustgarten has assisted the courts to not only be in legal compliance and strategically plan for the long term, but also to improve their services in the immediate short term.

After the initial intensive development phase, the LAP work is now a matter of upkeep: it's vital that these be "living documents" and that we continue to build on the strides we have made in knowledge and service in every court. It was never our intention to allow the LAP planning process to be merely a bureaucratic formality resulting in a written document filed away on a shelf. To this end, Ms. Lustgarten continues to travel to most districts once a year to meet with the LAP team. These annual meetings are an opportunity to learn from the teams what is new in their district, to update them on developments at the statewide level, and to address any questions or problems and report these back to AOC.

## Bilingual Forms

Since 2018, New Mexico's Domestic Violence (DV) and Domestic Relations (DR) forms have been available to the public in bilingual English/Spanish format. Due to their urgent nature, DV forms may be completed in a language other than English and their translation is treated as top priority. Currently, DR forms are marked "Spanish trans-

lation for informational purposes only. Should be completed in English."

In 2019 we received a mean average of 31 DV/DR translation requests per month. DV forms were usually translated within one hour, and sometimes in a matter of minutes. During the incremental implementation phase in 2018, there was a mean average of 16 requests per month. By far the highest volume courts are the First Judicial District Court in Santa Fe and the Second Judicial District Court in Albuquerque.

The NM Judicial Translation Project Team continued to meet throughout 2019 to monitor data and to address training needs and policy questions. The next phase of the team's work is to look at the viability of accepting DR forms completed in other languages. To assess volume and turnaround time, a pilot in the First Judicial District Court Family Court Services Division was launched in July 2019.

Statewide, the volume of translation requests (for forms, pleadings and informational materials) continues to grow as LEPs and court staff become increasingly aware of the services available. Sincere thanks to our vendor, Texan Translation, for quickly and efficiently handling these requests. In 2019, they translated a total of 441,032 words!

## Scribing Pilot Program

In last year's annual report, we published an extensive feature on the Scribing Pilot Program in the Ninth Judicial District Court, including interviews with low literacy and LEP individuals who had benefited from the services. Under the pilot program, scribing services are provided on request to Self Represented Litigants (SRLs) who are unable to read or complete forms due to disability, illiteracy or Limited English Proficiency. Staff can assist by reading aloud, sight translating, or filling in the blanks on forms using the words spoken by the client.

An associated pilot is being conducted in the Second Judicial District Court in Albuquerque, utilizing the services of volunteer scribes from the community rather than court staff. When assisting LEPs, the volunteers use the Certified Languages International phone service. The scribing pilot is linked to the bilingual forms initiative: the volunteers serve as intermediaries between SRLs and the court, making the forms more accessible to the SRL while ensuring the court ultimately receives a form completed in English.

Thank you to the staff of the Ninth and Second Judicial District Courts, and to the community volunteers of ReadWest. The data and feedback yielded by the pilot will be vital in assessing the need and viability of extending these services statewide.

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***"I truly enjoy travelling to the courts and continuing to build on the relationships I have formed over the years with leadership and staff. I'm impressed by the enthusiasm and support I encounter: thank you all!"***

***-Pip Lustgarten, LAP Consultant, AOC Language Access Services***

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# NEW TRANSLATION PORTAL!



SPENT 10 MINUTES TRANSLATING SPANISH MEME TO ENGLISH

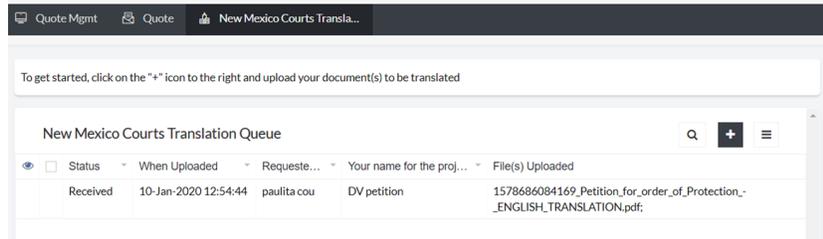


IT WASN'T FUNNY

In the "I'm getting old" department., a kid saw this and said, "oh, you 3D-printed the 'Save' icon."



This is brutal.



Texan Translation is a small, family-owned agency in Austin that was awarded the Language Access Services contract in September of 2018 to assist with a variety of translation needs.

The latest improvement to our translation services is an online portal that any court can use to submit a document and track its progress. On busy days, Texan Translation may receive several requests from different courts within an hour, each needing to be handled carefully and quickly:

- Receipt is confirmed to the submitting court, as well as to AOC Language Access staff.
- Original documents and any accompanying instructions are analyzed and assigned a priority (e.g., protective order applications move to the top of the queue).
- Certain types of evidentiary documents which cannot be translated under this contract are returned.
- PDFs are converted into Word and their formatting cleaned up.
- The order is assigned to Spanish>English translators, English>Spanish translators, (or occasionally Russian, Chinese, etc.) and proofreaders.
- Previous translations of similar material are recycled using translation memory software, but adapted to the new case.
- Document is translated and proofread using a custom New Mexico courts glossary for consistency.

- If requested, a bilingual version of the order or form is prepared, a formatting process more time-consuming than translation itself.
- Translation is emailed as a PDF, Word file or both, depending on the needs of the court and nature of the document.

Because this is a complex, multi-step process, all requests are tracked in a database to make sure nothing gets overlooked. Emailing documents and instructions back and forth became less and less feasible as volume increased. Starting in January of 2020, court users are invited to submit their requests directly into a shared, online portal which includes a live report of all documents for the last 90 days. At the top of this



portal is a simple form where the submitter uploads the originals and assigns the project a name. An email confirmation automatically verifies that requests have been received and entered into the queue. As the translation team works on the order, the status is updated to show where it is in the process. This transparent, real-time status helps administrators and translators work more efficiently, and all development costs were covered by the contractor.

***"It's been such a pleasure to work with Judge Lamar of the First JD on the translated forms project. Her thoughtful input has helped us enormously in moving forward with the DR pilot. The court provides guidance and Texan Translation gets the work done in record time. The result of this collaborative approach is improved access to justice and we are able to see the impact this program has on LEP families day to day."***

***- Paula Couselo-Findikoglu, Language Access Services, AOC***

# INTERPRETER SPOTLIGHT

Once again this year, AOC Language Access Services is dedicating a page to celebrating the people without whom our work would be impossible: our interpreters! The skill, experience and dedication levels of New Mexico's court interpreters are unrivaled and we are proud of and thankful for you all.

Our featured interpreters this year are **Leticia Martínez**, who works in the Southeast Region in the Spanish language, and **Joanna Manygoats**, a Navajo interpreter in the Northwestern area of the state.



**Leticia Martínez** first obtained an interpreter certification in the early 1980s, while primarily working as a teacher. After a 32 year teaching career, she returned to interpreting four years ago. Leticia explains: "I was drawn to court interpreting because as a Spanish teacher it tied in with my calling, and was a wonderful and challenging opportunity. Although many things have changed in the profession, the support I have received especially from my coordinator, AOC, the personnel, attorneys and judges in the court system as well as the training have made my experience a positive one."

**Janie Hernández, SE Region Coordinator:**

"Leticia Martínez is extremely valuable to the southeast region, in particular Clovis and Portales. Both cities are aware that she is the only interpreter I have residing in this area and they work with us to adjust times so she can cover every court (whether it be Magistrate or District courts in Clovis or Portales). It is not uncommon for her to go from one city/court to another in a short amount of

time. She and I are in constant communication with each other and the courts. The courts and Leticia, especially, have gone above and beyond to make sure that all of the hearings are covered.

Leticia without fail is prompt on accepting or declining a job. She lets me know ahead of time when she plans on being unavailable. She is extremely professional and courteous and my experience with her has always been very good. I appreciate Leticia very much."



"In addition to her many years of service as an interpreter in our courts, **Joanna Manygoats** is the Navajo voice of Clara, our website avatar! While Clara speaks in English and Spanish by means of Text to Speech software, no such option was available for Navajo. Each cue spoken by the avatar had to be individually recorded during studio sessions, so we are very grateful to Joanna for her patience!

Joanna was also a core member of the Improving Access to Justice for Native Peoples in State Courts project team, which developed a culturally-appropriate training and qualification process for court interpreters in Pueblo languages and Navajo. AOC can always rely on her expertise for a whole range of projects: thank you for your flexibility and passion, Joanna!"

**- Pip Lustgarten, LAP Consultant**

"Joanna is a true pleasure to work with. She is a kind soul that handles all jobs with complete professionalism and care. I have been working with Joanna for years and the courts are always so delighted to work with her. She is always enthusiastic and able to work with minimal supervision. Her commitment to serve her community is reflected in her performance."

**- Peggy Cadwell, NW Central Region Coordinator**

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*Thank you—Ahéhee'*

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¡Hasta  
pronto!



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